

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 PC-01 /063 W
-----131342Z 053970 /44

R 122000Z APR 77
FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7628
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL BELEM
AMCONSUL RECIFE
AMCONSUL PORTO ALEGRE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAO PAULO 0894

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BR
SUBJ: MDB SENATE LEADER OUTLINES OPPOSITION STRATEGY TO EXPECTED
ELECTORAL CHANGES

SUMMARY: MDB SENATE LEADER, FRANCO MONTORO, TOLD CONGEN OFFS
THAT CLOSING CONGRESS HAD HAD EFFECT OF UNITING OPPOSITION IN
MORE RADICAL POSTURE AGAINST GOVERNMENT. WHEN CONGRESS RECONVENES
MDB WOULD ATTEMPT TO CREATE "MOVEMENT OF DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE",
DENOUNCING GOVERNMENT'S EXPECTED CHANGES IN 1978 ELECTORAL RULES.
MDB PLANS TO BLAME GEISEL DIRECTLY FOR FALSE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS
WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO BENEFIT GOVERNMENT PARTY AND GEISEL'S POSITION
WITHIN REVOLUTIONARY "SYSTEM." MONTORO EXPECTS STRONG GOVERNMENT
REACTION TO MDB CAMPAIGN, INCLUDING CASSATIONS. WE BELIEVE IT IS
DOUBTFUL THAT THE MDB COULD HOLD RANKS IN FACE OF THE REGIME'S
EXPECTED ONSLAUGHTER AGAINST THE MDB'S PLANNED COURSE OF ACTION.
END SUMMARY.

1. SENATOR FRANCO MONTORO TOLD CONGEN OFFS APRIL 11 THAT MDB
HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT RECESS OF CONGRESS WAS PRE-
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FABRICATED CRISIS. ALLEGED GOVERNMENT CONCERN WITH ELECTION OF MORE
MILITANT CHAMBER OPPOSITION LEADER ALENCAR FURTADO WAS FALSE,
SINCE JUSTICE MINISTER FALCAO HAD INSTRUCTED MDB DEPUTIES HE CON-
TROLS TO VOTE FOR FURTADO. JUDICIAL REFORM WAS ALSO
PRETEXT. THE BILL WAS WIDELY OPPOSED BY JUDICIARY BECAUSE IT
INCREASED CENTRALIZATION WHEN DECENTRALIZATION WAS REQUIRED.
GOVERNMENT'S TRUE GOALS, MONTORO STATED, WERE REVEALED BY TYPE

OF REFORMS IT IS PROPOSING: TO KEEP MDB FROM POWER AND TO STRUCTURE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION PROCESS TO MAXIMIZE GEISEL'S CONTROL OVER IT. MONTORO SAID EFFECT OF PROPOSED REFORMS ON MDB WAS TO UNITE IT IN MORE RADICAL OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT.

2. MONTORO STATED THAT, AS SOON AS CONGRESS REOPENED, MDB PLANNED TO ATTEMPT TO CREATE A "MOVEMENT OF DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE" HELPEFULLY SUPPORTED BY DISSIDENT ARENA CONGRESSMEN, PRESS, MILITARY AND PEOPLE AT LARGE. MONTORO SAID MDB WOULD PLACE BLAME ON GEISEL DIRECTLY FOR FABRICATED CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS, CLAIMING THAT HE EVEN EXCEEDED THE LEGAL POWERS TO LEGISLATE GRANTED THE PRESIDENT UNDER THE FIFTH INSTITUTIONAL ACT. MONTORO MAINTAINED AI-5 EMPOWERED THE PRESIDENT TO DECREE REGULAR LAWS BUT NOT AMEND THE CONSTITUTION. (COMMENT: THIS A MOOT QUESTION. AI-5 STATES: "WHEN THE PARLIAMENTARY RECESS IS DECREED, THE EXECUTIVE POWER IS AUTHORIZED TO LEGISLATE IN ALL MATTERS....")

3. MONTORO AGREED THAT THE PRESIDENT MIGHT FIND THIS LINE OF REASONING HIGHLY OFFENSIVE, BUT STATED THAT THE ROLE OF THE MDB NOW WAS TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE BRAZILIAN PEOPLE AND TO THE WORLD AT LARGE THAT IT RULED ONLY BY FORCE. MONTORO SAID HIS HOPE WAS THAT, BY OBLIGING THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUOUSLY TO REVEAL ITS WEAKNESS IN SECURING SUPPORT FOR ITS POSITIONS, DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS IN THE SOCIETY -- ESPECIALLY IN THE MILITARY -- WOULD BE STRENGTHENED IN THEIR DEMANDS FOR A RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC RULE. HE SAID HE EXPECTED THE GOVERNMENT TO REACT BY CASSATING OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND THREATENING OTHER POLITICAL CRACKDOWNS.

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4. WHEN PRESSED ON HIS ESTIMATE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE MDB ENDEAVOR, MONTORO STATED HE WOULD HAVE TO ADMIT TODAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PROBABLY STRONG ENOUGH TO STAY IN POWER. BUT HIS HUNCH WAS THAT THERE MIGHT BE A CHANGE OF REGIME BEFORE THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE MDB HAD BEEN WORKING VERY DELIGENTLY IN RECENT MONTHS ON ITS MILITARY SUPPORT AND NOW COULD COUNT ON OFFICERS AT EVERY RANK. (COMMENT: PREVIOUSLY, MONTORO AND OTHER MDB LEADERS HAD BEEN CAREFUL TO NOTE THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE SUPPORT AMONG GENERALS.) HE ALLUDED TO RECENTLY RETIRED GEN. EULER BENTES AS AN ALLY.

5. MONTORO ALSO DESCRIBED A PARALLEL MDB APPROACH OF TURNING THE EXPECTED ELECTORAL REFORMS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. HE ASSERTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT ALWAYS KNOW THE EFFECTS OF ITS OWN MEASURES. IF IT REQUIRES STRAIGHT PARTY TICKET VOTING, FOR EXAMPLE, ARENA WILL DO BETTER IN THE NORTHEAST (WHERE IT IS ALREADY STRONG), BUT THE MDB WILL BENEFIT IN THE CENTER-SOUTH. LIKewise, IF THE MDB IS RESTRICTED TO DIRECT ELECTION CONTESTS IN ONLY THE CHAMBER AND ONE-THIRD OF THE SENATE IN 1978, IT WILL PUT

ALL ITS RESOURCES INTO THOSE RACES, TRYING TO WIN A MAJORITY
IN BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS. IN ANY CASE, MONTORO STATED, THE
MDB'S EFFORTS NOW WILL BE TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON THE
GOVERNMENT IN ANY WAY IT CAN.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAO PAULO 0894

6. COMMENT: MONTORO'S ATTITUDES -- AND HE IS REGARDED AS ONE OF
THE MODERATES IN THE MDB -- REFLECT A RADICALIZATION OF THE
OPPOSITION AS THE MDB SEES ITS CHANCES DIMINISHING OF ACHIEVING
POWER THROUGH THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. HOWEVER, A MORE RADICAL
MDB STRATEGY IMPLIES A JUDGMENT THAT OPINION WITHIN THE MILITARY
CAN BE SWUNG IN FAVOR OF A RETURN TO A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM.
OUR READING OF THE SITUATION FROM SAO PAULO IS THAT WHILE GEISEL'S
STANDING WITHIN THE MILITARY MAY BE
OPEN TO CRITICISM (WHICH IS NATURAL AS THE TIME FOR THE SELECTION
OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSOR NEARS), THE MILITARY REGARD THE MDB
WITH DISTINCTLY LESS ESTEEM. IF THE MDB CARRIES OUT ITS
PROPOSED STRATEGY, AND THE GOVERNMENT REACTS WITH CASSATIONS, IT
IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER THE MDB CAN HOLD RANKS.

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Message Attributes

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